A

Visitation of Love

To all People,

More especially

To the INHABITANTS

OF THE

City of Bristol.

LONDON:

Printed for Benjamin Clark, *Book-seller in* George-Yard, *in* Lumbard-street, 1681.

To the READER.

Friendly Reader,

THe occaſion of theſe following Lines is not becauſe the Lord hath been wanting to any Age or People in his manifold Loving-kindneſs, as at large the Scriptures of Truth bear witneſs, in ſending of his Prophets, riſing early, and lying down late, and the work of their day, and bent of their ſpirits hath been no leſs than the exaltation of their Maſter, Chriſt Jeſus, and the welfare of the ſouls of all men: Yet ſuch is the manifold Mercies of the Lord, extended to mankind, that he would not have any to periſh, but that all might inherit everlaſting Life. Therefore ſuch is the goodneſs of God, that he raiſeth up many witneſſes for to bear Teſtimony to his Name and Power, and its ſufficiency from one Age and Generation to another, as he hath now in this our day, bleſſed be his Name for evermore. And knowing that powerful Arm to carry them through the Work of the day unto which they have been call'd, and his ſupporting hand to uphold them that have in faithfulneſs diſcharged what the Lord hath required of them, I could do no leſs but be faithful to that little meaſure which God hath manifeſted unto me, having known the terror of God, for being unfaithful, therefore have I diſcharg'd this my Duty to God, which by his Spirit was required of me, who am one of the leaſt of many thouſands. For looking back and conſidering the parable mention'd in Mat. 25. *unto whom the Talents were given, it was for the improvement of the ſame, and not to be hid in the Earth; for he that had one Talent, had he made that good improvement of it as he ought to have done, no Queſtion at all, but he could have had the Anſwer of* Well done good and faithful Servant, *as it was to him that receiv'd the five, and gain'd other five, and he that receiv'd the two, and gain'd other two.*

This therefore being required of me, I could not be clear in the ſight of my God, knowing that to him I muſt give up my account that only can forgive ſin; for it is out of the power of any mortal upon the Earth ſo to do; although vain men, being puffed up in the heat of their minds, Lucifer-*like, would have to them-*

ſelves the Lord's prerogative; yet let all ſuch know, that there is a juſt God, that can and will reward every one according to the deeds done in their Bodies, whether good or evil.

Therefore People, be not wilfully blind, nar led away from the Lord of Life and Glory, that will Reign and Rule, according to his own good will and pleaſure; And who ſhall dare ſay, What doſt thou? *Then the Money-changers and Hireling Fair ſayers, that would curſe thoſe who for Conſcience-ſake (and nothing elſe) cannot give them Money, and put into their Mouths, how earneſt and vigorouſly do they purſue them with their Excommunications? Yet thoſe whom they have ſo dealt by, if they will but agree with them, and their Courts, and give them Money, they ſhall be bleſt in again. Ah people, conſider, conſider, and ſool not away your precious ſouls, nor ſpend your precious time for a thing of nought; Look into all the Scriptures of Truth, from* Geneſis *to the end of the* Revelation, *and ſee whether you find the like practice from any of the true Prophets, or Chriſt, or by his command (whom all ought to obey) but the contrary; neither did the Apoſtles and Miniſters of Chriſt ever do the like, for non-payment of Money, and then* (for Money) *promiſe to bleſs them again.* 24 MA 59

But indeed it is no wonder, ſeeing that it hath been the work of the falſe Prophets and Deceivers in former Ages, that 'tis ſo now in theſe our days; But there is a Mark ſet by our Lord and Maſter, Chriſt Jeſus, which is, You ſhall know them by their Fruits, for ye cannot gather Grapes of Thorns, nor Figs of Thiſtles.

But this I teſtifie, and that for God, over the heads of all ſuch that ſo act and do, that neither their Bleſſings nor their Curſings avail for or againſt us; they ſhall no more hurt the righteous, or hinder the everlaſting welfare and enjoyment of the people of God in this our day, than Balaam *did, that was hired to curſe* Iſrael, *whom God had bleſt; For the Lord's power is the ſame, and his arm is not at all ſhorten'd, bleſſed be his name, and that for evermore.*

And you that are following the ſame practice, ſee who was the pattern for theſe things, and be you warned whilſt the Lord's love is held forth and tendred to you, leſt when you come to lay down your heads upon your dying pillows, and muſt go from hence, and be no more ſeen, your cry will be as Balaam's *was,* Oh that I might die the death of the Righteous, and my latter end be like his!

A Visitation of Love to all People, more especially to the Inhabitants of the City of BRISTOL.

AS one among whom I have received my natural Breath, am I engaged in the love of God to you all, of what Rank or Quality soever, wishing your health and prosperity in this World, but more especially the eternal welfare of your immortal Souls, even as mine own Soul, which truly ought to be, and also it must be every particular concern, if they expect to enjoy an Inheritance with the Lord when we are gone from hence, and these Tabernacles of Clay are laid in the Dust. Therefore as one that spent several years, one while hearkening to one man's sayings, and another while to another, yet still in that estate my Soul wanted the knowledge of a Saviour and Redeemer, that I might be redeemed from a vain Conversation, and the evil courses and customs of this World that I lived in, until I came to know Christ Jesus, the Gift of the Father's love, and the light of the World, for so he testified of himself, *Joh.* 8. 12. *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the World; He that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.* And until I came to know his Kingly Government in me to be set up, and his Rule and Reign yielded unto, the old Enemy of man's Salvation did bear rule, and carried me captive at his will: And this is his Work in all the Sons and Daughters of men that stand and remain in the unregenerated Estate, being alienated from God, and from the Commonwealth of *Israel*, that knoweth not the new Birth, as Jesus said in *Mat.* 18. 3. *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; and to *Nicodemus* (a great man in his day, yet knew not the new Birth,) Jesus said, *Joh.* 3. 3. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* And seeing it is so, let a through search be made, that you may see in what condition you are, and that with the light of Jesus, which will not deceive any, as they come to be guided by it; for it is an unerring

erring Path, and many have found it ſo in this our day of viſitation, as truly as the Saints did in Ages and Generations that are gone, bleſſed be the *Lord* for it, for unto him the Honour is due. Therefore as one that hath known the terror of the Almighty for ſin, I cannot but perſwade all to yield Obedience to the Will of the Lord, whoſe Will is your Sanctification, even to be ſanctified throughout, in Soul, Body and Spirit, and that the mind, and the will and affections might be brought under the Government of Chriſt Jeſus; for it is his particular right there to rule and to govern, and certainly where he ſo governs, it alſo will be the Creatures everlaſting happineſs; for an out-ſide ſhew of holineſs will not ſerve the Lord, but as it is written, *My Son give me thy heart:* Therefore ſeeing he made it, it is his proper right to rule in it. But the Fairſayers, in times paſt, and in ages that are gone, made clean the out-ſide of the Cup and Platter, but within they were full of Extortion and Exceſs, *Mat.* 23. 25. Therefore let a true ſearch paſs through and a right examination, and that with the Spirit of Truth, and that will give every one a right underſtanding in the matter, how it ſtands between him and the Lord, and this will let all ſee whether their condition be not like unto them ſpoken of in *Mat.* 15. 8, 9. *This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, but in vain do they worſhip me, teaching for Doctrine the Commandments of men*; And if ſo, I warn ſuch, (and that in the Counſel of the Lord) let the time paſt be ſufficient, for with ſuch Sacrifices God is not well-pleaſed, neither hath he any regard unto them, neither is it any more acceptable than the cutting off a Dog's Neck, or the offering of Swines Bloud. For as in the days of old the halt and the blind was not that which was acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, but that which was without blemiſh, as *Malach.* 1. 13, 14. *Ye ſaid alſo, What a wearineſs is this, and ye ſnuffed at it, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the ſick; thus ye brought an Offering; Should I accept this at your hands? ſaith the Lord; But curſed be the Deceiver, that hath in his Flock a Male, and voweth and ſacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen.*

O conſider, I deſire you, for your Souls are concerned as well as mine and your peace with the Lord in the day of account will be as acceptable to you, as mine will be to me, for the Lord will certainly be Judge himſelf, neither ſhall any ſay, what doſt thou? when he will juſtly reward every one according as his works ſhall be. Now

Now we (that live in a time wherein the large *Loving-kindneſs* or God in Chriſt is manifeſted to us in his mighty Power and his matchleſs Love do bear witneſs thereof to his glory, and the true conſideration thereof ought to humble us before him, and wholly to be reſigned to his Service, as *Paul* teſtified, when it pleaſed God to reveal his Son in him, he reaſoned not with Fleſh and Bloud, but willingly gave up in Obedience to his Requirings and to his Will, although altogether contrary to the Will of himſelf, whilſt he ſtood in the alienation from God, and alſo contrary to the Will of them by whom he was ſent to perſecute the Saints; yet both were ſeemingly zealous of the *Law*, and the Shadows which were Types of Chriſt, yet when he came, how blind and dark were they, being filled with prejudice, inſomuch that ſome of them ſaid, *If we ſuffer him, he will draw all people after him*; for he ſendeth forth his Diſciples, ſaying, *Freely ye have received, freely give*, Mat. 10. 8. And therefore they ſtirred up the People, and Magiſtrates, and Rulers, not to ſuffer them to have a quiet Habitation outwardly amongſt them, yet was he Lord of all, who ſaid, *The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Neſts, but the Son of man hath not a place whereon to lay his Head.*

Now conſider, I warn you in the fear of God, you that are in the ſame Spirit, that thoſe perſecuting *Jews* were in, who cried, *Away with him; we will not have this man to to rule over us, releaſe to us* Barrabas, *and crucifie Jeſus.* This Doctrine, *Freely ye have received, freely give* ſutes now with thoſe men who preach for hire and divine for money, it will not ſtand with their Intereſt, and Trade will go to decay, and they ſhall not then ſit as chief above the People, as their hearts deſire; and their earthly Honour and Preheminence amongſt men, will be laid low, it will be laid in the Duſt, and their Craft will come to nothing: For, now there is a People like-minded with their Maſter Chriſt Jeſus, and they perſwade the people to hearken to the Light within, the Spirit of Truth, that ſhould lead into all Truth; For ſo ſaid he, *I will ſend the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, and he that is with you, ſhall be in you, and his Work there, is to drive out all the Money Changers out of his Temple, for it is his right there to rule and reign, and to govern, for he is come to convince the World of ſin*: Yea, bleſſed be the Lord for it, as many as have yielded Obedience to his heavenly Requirings, can ſo witneſs him come, to lead them in the juſt man's Path, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Well, a Conſideration came upon the outward formal Fairſayers in the

the days past, *As for this Jesus, he doth more mightier Works than we, and if we suffer him, all People will run after him, and our uppermost Seats in the Synagogues and chiefest Rooms at Feasts will not be upholden, we will sly to the Magistrates for some Relief, to suppress and keep him under, and we will undervalue and disesteem this Jesus of* Nazareth, *and thereby we may get some room in the minds of Magistrates and Rulers for the upholding of our Interest amongst the People*; Yea, how did they undervalue the Lord of Life and Glory, *Is not this the Carpenter's Son, whose Father and Mother we know? And can any good thing come out of* Nazareth? And why was all this outcry against him? Was it not because he said, *Ye are blind leaders of the blind*, and because his Life and Doctrine suted not with theirs, and that he sent forth his Disciples, Not to preach for filthy Lucre, and compel People to pay them so much by the year, if not, a stinking Gaol should be their portion? No, no, *As ye have received freely, so do you freely give*. And this I testifie, The Lord of Glory, Christ Jesus, that suffer'd in that holy Body, without the Gates of *Jerusalem*, whom the Fair-sayers vilified and made sute to *Pilate* to condemn him to die; that same Christ Jesus, and not another, him that was nailed to the Cross, and his precious Bloud was spilt, and who tasted Death for every man, hath sent forth his Disciples that have been taught by him, and that have been learners in his School, in the like manner, and with the same Message, not preaching for Gold, Silver or Apparel, but *as they have received freely, so also do they minister*, turning people to the Gift of God, Christ the Light, and to obey him, and his heavenly power to be set up in them, as King and Lawgiver; and this Prince of Peace he instructs them, and teacheth them, to live peaceably under the Government here below, and desire the everlasting welfare and prosperity of all, both in this World, and that which is to come, however we may be vilified by the hirelings to the Rulers and Magistrates of the Nation, by rendring of us a people not fit to have Commerce in our Native Country, for the getting an honest livelyhood for our Wives and Families, for as the Scripture saith, *He is worse than an Infidel that provideth not for his Family*. And all the reason is, God is our Witness, for not defiling our Consciences, and for not paying our Money to the Hirelings, that seek more for the Fleece than for the Flock; however, our comfort is, That the Lord will gather us home to himself, from the mouths of all the idle Shepherds, where they shall neither tear nor devour, nor yet become their prey, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest, where the righteous are receiving their mansions

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from their Father, and a reward for all their sufferings, whilst the Lord gave them a being in these Tabernacles of Clay.

Now therefore, seeing our Teacher is come, as *Paul* testified to *Heb.* 1. 1, 2. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoke unto us by his Son*; And that he speaketh by him to us in this Age, Glory be given to him, slight not his Love, I desire you, for in the Obedience to the will of the Lord, I am drawn forth thus to write; and for the clearing my conscience in the sight of God, knowing to whom I must give account for all the Deeds done in the Body, whether Good or Evil; Therefore, as one that hath obtained Mercy, my soul's desire is for you all, that the Lord may open your eyes, that you might be turned from the Darkness to the true Light, and that you might be turned from the Power of Satan to the Power of God; for as Christ testified, *John* 3. 19. *This is the Condemnation, That Light is come into the World, and men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil.*

Therefore, as one whose soul hath been made sorrowful, and that many a time, by the wickedness of many, in slighting the Light, and by the deriding and undervaluing it, and rendring it as an insufficient thing, I do and must testifie to it, and the sufficiency of it; for God, who is Light, as in *John* 1 chap. 1. v. 5. *This is the Message that we have heard of him and declare unto you, That God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Therefore for God, over the Heads of all Blasphemers and Slighters of it, I do testifie, That in the Grace, Love, and Favour of God is made known, which brings Salvation, and which hath appear'd to all men, teaching us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. Therefore a warning in the true fear and dread of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth to you all, of what sort or Religion soever you are, where have been or still remains scoffing at the Light, I say, except you repent, it will be your Condemnation for ever: therefore let an hourly remembrance be in your minds, of what Jesus said, *Mat.* 2: 44. *Whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken; but on whom it shall fall, it will grind him to Powder.* And let none say we deny or slight the holy Scriptures, for my Soul (with many hundreds more) praiseth the Lord for the preservation of them to this day, although many false aspersions have been cast upon us concerning our dis-regarding of them;

but by many ways the old Enemy works to wilfie that which sulketh most at the downfal of his Kingdom. But the Lord did not inspire or illuminate holy men of old time, to write, or set them forth for men to make a yearly Revenue by the selling of people the Conceits of their own Brain upon them, but they are as so many Testimonies for the Instruction and Comfort of those that truly and sincerely love the Lord, and also for the Reproof of the Wicked, as *Paul* said to *Timothy*, *It is profitable for Doctrine and for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction.* Therefore my Souls desire is for the Eternal Good of you all, without respect of Persons, that you might see the way wherein you are walking; for darkness hath covered the Faces of many, and in it they are led, not knowing whither they are going, but are running like the Horse that rusheth in the Battel, not knowing it is for his Life. Therefore a Travel remains upon my Spirit for your Eternal Welfare, that you might come to see the way of God, and persevere on in it, that no longer you might be deceived; For, it is not the Father for the Son, nor the Son, that shall answer for the Father, but every one for his own Iniquity, when we must come to stand naked, and be before the Tribunal Seat of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, seeing the Concern is so great, and the future Joy or Misery is everlasting; trifle not away your precious time, for the time that's past can't be recall'd, and for the time to come, it is in the hand of the Lord; And who amongst us knows, whether or no we may abide in these Tabernacles of Clay, to see the light of another day? Seeing then it is your Souls concern as well as mine, prize your time, and be not led away any longer by the inticing words that man's Wisdom teacheth; for as the holy Apostle said, (1 *Cor.* 2. 4.) who was a true Minister of Jesus Christ, *That his Speech and his Preaching was not with the inticing words of man's Wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, testifying of that they had heard, and which they had seen with their Eyes, and their hands hath handled, which was the Word of Life,* 1 John 1. 1. And in *Romans* 15. 18. *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me.* And this is the Example of the true Ministers of *Jesus Christ* now at this day, which they mind and follow, for it is not Carnal Ends nor Self Interest, but the Glory of God that is in their eyes, and the eternal welfare of the Souls of all, which largely denotes a true Minister of *Jesus Christ*, and also what they are that follow not their Example, but are seeking the

Fleece

Fleece more than the Flock, and those that will not put into their Mouths, they prepare War against, and what in them lyeth, are incensing of People against them which for *Conscience sake* cannot conforme to their Wills and Desires, and upon no other account (the righteous Judge of Heaven and Earth knows) but to keep their Peace with him, because that we know sin brings sorrow and misery; and the consideration of it I leave to the righteous Witness of God in every one. *Whether is it best (as the Apostle said) to obey God or Man, judge ye?*

So people, my desire is for you all, that you may come to know God for your selves, and let his righteous Witness in you sway your hearts, and that will discover unto you what the Lord is requiring of you, and how it stands between you and the Lord; for there may be a false Rest, and a false Peace, that stands not in the will of God, which the Hypocrites heap to themselves, which will not last, but is of a perishing Nature. Therefore let a serious Consideration pass through, for whilst the mind stands alienated from God, although there be a performance of Formalities and outward Worships, yet if the Mind, Soul and Spirit is not made conformable to the obeying of God in his requirings, that Peace will pass away; And although men may cry *Peace, Peace*, while the Creature stands in the alienation from God, and doth not his Will, I say, to that Estate there is none; *For there is no Peace (saith my God) to the wicked, who are daubing up with untempered Mortar.* But, as it hath been the work of Christ's Ministers, so is it still the same, to bring People to the light, that they might see the way wherein they are walking, for the light makes all things manifest, even the hidden Work of Darkness, as *Paul* testifieth to the *Ephesians*, 5. 13. *But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the Light; for whatsoever doth make manifest, is Light.* And seeing every secret Sin is made manifest by the Light, and it is the Love of God in so doing, in placing a Guide so near him, as *Moses* said, and as the Apostle said also, *The Word is nigh in thy heart, and in the mouth, that thou maist obey it and do it*; which *Word was in the beginning, and all things made by him; and in him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men*: Therefore away with your deridings and your undervalulings, and your low esteem of the *Light*, and come to embrace it, and follow its leadings and its guidings; for it leadeth into the right Path, and into the unerring Ways; for it is the Infallible Guide.

Object.

Seeing you do so much cry up the sufficiency of this Light, and its Infallible Guidings, How comes it to pass that some of you that profess it walk contrary thereunto?

Answ.

The reason is, Because of their Disobedience thereto; for as it is in its self pure, so the Nature of it is to purifie and cleanse, and that throughout, in Soul, Body and Spirit: And this hath been its Work, and is the same, and will remain; for the Willing and Obedient they eat of the Good of the Land, but the Rebellious dwell in a dry Land. And this is the very cause, although God in his tender Loving-kindness hath manifested of himself, and desireth the Eternal Welfare of all, yet such have ill-requited the Lord, and have been guilty of the Sin of Ingratitude; but a Day of Misery will overtake such, except they repent, and that whilst there is a place of Repentance to be found; and the Lord will be clear, and his Truth clear, and them that truly love God also.

Oh! Consider what you have been reproaching of, for many years past, and how you have slighted Christ Jesus the true Light, even as that Generation did, that the Scriptures of Truth declareth of, whose bodily Appearance was too low for them, therefore not regarded, but set at nought by the *Babel*-builders, that refused the chief Corner-stone; a low esteem indeed they had of him, when he took upon him that holy Body, which was prepared for him, which was nail'd to the Tree. How many have said in derision, *What, you must be guided by the Light?* Yea, blessed be the Lord, many can truly say, they have found it sufficient to lead them into all Truth; and it is become their Stay and Rock, and sure Foundation also, which the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against, although many have and do crucifie to themselves the Lord of Life and Glory afresh, and put him to open shame, yet is he become (to them that trust in him) their Hope and sure Anchor, Christ Jesus the Light that enlighteneth every one; The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us. Now mind (those that would be guided by it, and led by it) what a good work it wrought for them and in them. It taught them to deny Ungodliness

ness and worldly Lusts, and also to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil World; but on the contrary, Those that slighted this Light and Grace of God, and the day of their Visitation, through it they remained in Darkness, Sin and Disobedience. Therefore I warn you, and that in the Fear of God, and in love to your Souls also, slight not the day of God's Love unto you, lest he say unto you, as he did once to the old World, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man.*

Oh my Native Country-men! My Soul desireth your eternal Welfare, from the greatest to the least, that whilst God's good Spirit striveth with you, you may hearken to his Counsel; for he hath given every one something of his Spirit, a Tallent to improve; therefore hide it not in the Earth, I desire you, lest it become your Condemnation, and everlasting Wo and Sorrow, to receive the like Punishment, as the Scriptures of Truth testifie of in the Parable, *To be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter Darkness.* Oh consider, consider, I earnestly desire you, let not the Vanity, and Delights, and Pleasures of this World draw away your mind from God. Oh, who would lose an eternal enjoyment for a momentary sinful pleasure?

I tell you, and that of a Truth, God is not an hard Master, he reapeth not where he did not sow: But, as he hath given a Talent, he doth expect an improvement of it, and the Lord will certainly call us all to an account: For, as the Apostle said, *His Servants you are, whom you obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness.*

Trifle not away your precious time; Who of us knows how soon we must give an account at the Bar of God's Justice? Consider who it is you are serving, whether it be not your own hearts Lust and Seeking the Pleasure and Vanities of this World, that will fade away and come to an end, and must be left behind us.

Therefore my souls desire is for the Good and Welfare of your immortal souls, can I truly say, the God of Heaven and Earth bears me witness, even every one, without respect of Persons, and let the Spirit of Christ, the Light, have room in your hearts, and entertain him, for he is certainly the best Guest, give him the chiefest Room in your hearts, and let his Power come to work there, and his Government

vernment be set up there, then will his Company become delightful and very pleasant. Oh, let not another Guest rob him of his Prerogatives: for if we entertain him, he will not leave us, when we come to lay down our heads; but will give us a Mansion in his Father's House. Oh consider, I desire you, who would but make this good Exchange. Then seeing the Love and Favour of God is everlasting and the perishing things of this World will leave us; Surely sad will be the end of all such that return evil for good unto the Lord from whom we receive all Mercies. Delay not your time, but become Co-workers together with God, and hearken to the guidings of the Light, seeing it makes all things manifest: And as the Prophet *Amos* testified, chap. 4. 13. *For lo, He that formeth the Mountains, and createth the Wind, and declareth unto man what his thoughts are, the Lord God of Hosts is his Name.*

Therefore come to the Heart-searcher, and be willing to be made conformable to the Will of God, and be subject to him and governed by him, then that which is not of God, will truly be made manifest, and you will see that a bare formal way of Worship will not answer the Holy Will of God; Nay, nay, be not deceived, it is not outside-shew; but those that *worship* God aright, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth; for such the Father seeks to worship him, as *Jesus Christ* told the Woman of *Samaria*, John 4. 23.

Therefore, being required by the God of Heaven and Earth to go to the Steeple-house, called St. *Thomas*'s, and there to bear my Testimony for the *Lord* against false Prophets, as by the *Lord* it was required of me, whose everlasting Name I dread and fear, and desire for ever may obey and stand in his Counsel; and in these Words did I deliver what I had to say, as well as I could, being dragged along by the hair of the Head, by the Sexton, as they called him, and the rude multitude: *Woe to the false Prophets, that run and are not sent of the Lord; for they profit not the People at all*, Jeremiah 23. 32. *Therefore come out from amongst them, saith the Lord, and partake not of their sins, lest ye partake of their Plagues*, Revel. 18. 4.

More had I to deliver there, but could not, by reason of the Unchristian Usage I there received, shewing themselves to be in the same spirit as the Scriptures of Truth testified against, *John* 16. 2. 3.

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They shall put you out of their Synagogues, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service; and these things will they do (saith Christ) *because they have not known the Father nor me.* And in *Acts* 21. 28, 30. Crying out, *Men of* Israel, *help, this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the People, and the Law, and this place, and all the City was moved, and the People ran together, and they took* Paul, *and drew him out of the Temple.*

Therefore, while you remain in the same Spirit that they were in that used violence; but little better Fruit can be expected at your hands: But to God I commit my Cause: for in his Counsel I went, and not in mine own Will, neither with mine own words, neither with any premeditated matter, neither by the advice or appointment of any Person or People; For whatsoever the Lord requireth of any of us, to him we must be obedient; For we receive not our Testimony of Man, nor by the Will of Man, but of the Lord, whilst we stand in his Counsel: Therefore I can do no less but let you know that what I did in going and speaking as aforesaid, was only as I was perswaded in my own Heart, in which I have Peace with God.

Now consider, People, Wherein doth this Spirit differ from the old Fairsayers, *That was making clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, but within it was full of Extortion and Excess?*

I appeal to all that are impartial: Where is the difference? Is it not the same Spirit? and doth it not use the same way and means, crying out, *Men of* Israel *help*; so now, *Help Magistrates, we fear we shall come too low, and our Trade will go down; There is a People risen up that bear Testimony against our Trade, and say,* They have freely received, and freely are they willing to impart to the People of what the Lord hath manifested, or made known unto them; Yea, it is certain so, for Christ Jesus, their Master, gave them that charge, and they dare do no other; They are not compelling of People, they have no Market-Bell to toll, nor People to bring them in Money; neither do they force People to pay them Money, whether they hear them or not; neither do they incense People, that they should not take part of the good of the Creation, that the Lord the righteous Judge hath afforded to mankind, and that will judge righteously. But their advice is, to live in love all one with another, and desire the good of all, and that through a sober Life and Conversation, and an honest Endeavour in

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the World, they may labour with their Families rather to be helpful than otherwise.

But on the contrary, the cry of the Fairsayer, the Hireling saith, *I can't have my dues paid, and I will endeavour to compel it, the Law is on my side, and I will warn men not to trade and deal with such, that will not buy our Ware*, and thereby beget a Diseteem of such in the minds of People, that they may not correspond together, and ruine them that way. But however, *Rabshak's* may rage, and *Shimei* may curse, and although *Balaam's* Spirit would utter it self, yet the *Lord* is with us; and although (as the Apostle said, 1 *Cor.* 4. 12, 13.) *Being reviled we bless, being persecuted, we suffer it, being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and many false reports hath the old enemy raised, that worketh divers ways, sometimes to suggest things into the minds of People one way, and sometimes another: So that these Devices are many, as of old:* Report, and we will report; *but in the Light he is seen, and his by-ways are made manifest.*

Therefore wo to Crown of Pride, to the Drunkards of *Ephraim*, whose glorious Beauty is a fading Flower, your Bed will be too short to stretch your selves upon, and your Covering will be too narrow for to wrap your selves in it, *Isa.* 28. 1, 20. It is not all the fine Dresses, nor eloquent Speeches, will serve Divine Justice, when the Lord God of Life and Glory comes to render reward, then will he make Inquisition how your days and years have been spent? whether it hath been to the advancement of the Honour of God, or the promotion of the Delight of your own mind? is not Self-exaltation more in your aim than the Exaltation of Christ's Kingdom? Consider seriously, and let a true Examination pass through you, between the Lord and your own Souls, for the Lord will judge aright, and the hidden things of Darkness will be brought to Light, when it will be said, *Who hath required these things at your hands?* Consider, I say, you that profess your selves to be Teachers of the People by your many years preaching, What change do we see wrought? Are not People rather further from God; and alienated in their minds, following their own Hearts Lust? Where do we see Sobriety and Chastity wrought, but rather the Drunkard groweth into more Excess of Drunkenness, and the great abuse that is daily made of the Lord's Mercies? Oh call to remembrance: It is not many years since the Lord threatened with a Famine, and how hath

his Goodneſs and Mercy abounded once again? and what is the requital but Exceſs from day to day? for which the *Lord* will certainly recompence upon the head of the Tranſgreſſors

Secondly, Where do we ſee Sobriety and Chaſtity any more encreaſed then was in years paſt, but rather abundance of Exceſs? Are not the People committing wickedneſs with greedineſs, and drawing upon themſelves ſwift Deſtruction? Oh conſider, conſider theſe things, and lay it to heart; for the pure God of Heaven and Earth is of purer eyes then to behold any impure thing. What then will become of thoſe that live in the exceſs of this adulterous Spirit? What, do you think there is no God that will puniſh for theſe Abominations? Surely the time will come that you muſt ſtand naked and bare, at the great Tribunal of a juſt God, where you ſhall receive a juſt reward for the Deeds done in this body, whether good or evil, then he or ſhe that departed from Iniquity in the day of God's love to them, ſhall enter into the joy of their Lord. But there will be a Gulf between them and the abominable that ſerved their filthy Luſt, and Pleaſure, and Wantonneſs of Life and Converſation. Oh, how are people decking themſelves, not knowing what to wear, nor yet what to put on! How are they diſfiguring their bodies that the Lord hath made beautiful and comely! Oh, how forgetful are you of *Solomon's* Teſtimony, that ſaid, *Pride goeth before Deſtruction, and a haughty mind before a Fall!*

Thirdly, How do the Swearers multiply their Oaths, from the Child (before he can ſpeak plain) to the Aged People! Oh what a bad temper of Spirit are people fallen into! Oh, what evil examples are the old to the young in this particular that the worthy Name of the Lord is diſhonoured day by day, although he giveth unto all Life, Breath and Being! Oh how cuſtomary are Oaths in the mouths of people, that it is the common Diſcourſe, that many cannot utter many Words, but the holy Name of the Lord is blaſphemed by them, ſometimes calling to their Creator to paſs his Sentence of Puniſhment upon them, with many blaſphemous Speeches not fit to be mentioned.

Oh you People of the City of *Briſtol!* conſider, I deſire you, having nothing elſe but true Love towards you, from the greateſt to the loweſt, deſiring your eternal welfare, the Righteous God knoweth, unto whom I muſt give an account as well as you. I cannot but put

you in mind how famous a City it was for Sobriety and Chaſtity; but now Wickedneſs is lodged in a great part of it, that the honeſt-hearted are daily grieved at it, as righteous *Lot* was in his day amongſt the wicked *Sodomites*; and as *Jeremiah* the Prophet ſaid in his day, ſo may we ſay in our day, *That becauſe of Oaths the Land mourneth.*

Now conſider, you that preach for Hire, and divine for Money, and them that will not put into your mouths (as the Prophet ſaid,) *you prepare War againſt them, look round about you, and ſee what good Effect all your Will-worſhip hath done:* Had you been ſent of the LORD, you would have profited the people; But, ſaith the *Lord*, (by the Prophet *Jeremiah*,) *They ran, but I ſent them not, therefore they ſhall not profit the people at all.* And this is an evident Token, and a clear Demonſtration, who are the Miniſters of Chriſt, and who are not.

And the Scriptures of Truth bear record, by which you Hirelings merchandize and get gain; It diſcovers very clearly who were the true Prophets and Miniſters of Jeſus, and who were not; Therefore come to that undeniable Record, and be tried by it. *Iſa.* 9. 10. For the leaders of this people cauſe them to err, and they that are led of them, are deſtroyed, *Jerem.* 5. 30, 31. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land. The Prophets prophecie falſly, and the Prieſts bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it ſo: and what will ye do in the end thereof?* Jerem. 23. 16. *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Hearken not unto the Words of the Prophets that prophecie unto you; they make you vain: they ſpeak a viſion of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.* verſe 21, 22. *I have not ſent the Prophets, yet they ran; I have not ſpoken to them, yet they prophecied; But if they had ſtood in my Counſel, and had cauſed my people to hear my Words, then they ſhould have turned them from their evil ways, and from the evil of their doings.* Mark that people; Had they ſtood in God's Counſel, the people would have been made better by their Doctrine. *Micb.* 2. 11. *If a man walking in the Spirit of Falſhood do lie, ſaying, I will prophecie unto thee of Wine and of ſtrong Drink, he ſhall even be the Prophet of this People:* and chap. 3. 5, 11. *Thus ſaith the Lord, concerning the Prophets that make my people err; they bite with their Teeth, and cry Peace; and he that putteth not into their Mouths, they even prepare War againſt him; the Heads thereof judge for Reward, and the Prieſts thereof teach for Hire, and the Pro-*

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phets thereof divine for Money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil will come upon us. Isa. 30. 10. *Which say to the Seers, see not, and to the Prophets, prophesie not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesie Deceits.* Ezek. 34. 2, 3, 4. *Son of Man, prophesie against the Shepherds of Israel, prophesie and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the Shepherds, Woe be to the Shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves, should not the Shepherds feed the Flock? You eat the Fat, and you cloath you with the Wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the Flock; the weak have ye not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost, but with Force, and with Cruelty have you ruled over them.*

Now consider, you that are in the very same Practice, you are seen to be in the very same Spirit in this our day and age, as well as they in ages past, because your Practices agree alike; so that whensoever the Lord raiseth up his faithful Ones to bear Testimony against the false Prophets, that lay heavy Burdens on mens shoulders, but will not touch them with one of their fingers. You stir up the people against them, hale them before Magistrates, and cause them to be sent to Prison.

What! Was it for any other thing then obeying the Lord, that the Prophet *Isaiah* walked naked three years, but to shew the nakedness of the people? Therefore is there Wo pronounced against those that were covered, but not with the Spirit of God.

What Evil had *Jeremiah* the Prophet done, when he was cast into the Prison, into the noisome Dungeon, but for delivering of his message faithfully, as he had received of God, and it came to pass; as in *Isaiah* 25. 3, 4 5 6, 7. where he testifieth, *That the Lord sent his Servants, rising up early and speaking,* (yet they hearkened not,) *Turn ye, Turn ye every one from his evil Way, and from the evil of your Doings; but they hearkened not to the Lord, but provoked him to Anger?*

What evil had *Daniel* the Prophet done, when he was cast into the Den of Lyons, but for praying to his God, upon whom he trusted?

What evil had the three Children done, when they were cast into the

fiery Furnace? Was it for any thing else than their Obedience to God, which eminently supported them, as is largely testified?

What! Was it for any evil that the *High-Priest* and *Fairsayers* put to death our Lord and Master *Christ Jesus*, (whom we desire for ever to obey?) Nay, nay; but his Life, and Practice, Doctrine, and Miracles condemned them, wherein he far excelled the great Rabbies, that loved of men to be called Masters, and therefore they hated him, crying out, *Away with him, release unto us* Barrabas, *a Murtherer rather than Christ?* Why? He is giving Counsel to his Ministers, not to take Wages for their Preaching; not to sue men at the Law for Tythes, and that which the Priests call their dues, yet never allowed by Christ, nor yet gave any such Commission to his Disciples, neither to cast People into Prison, who for Conscience-sake cannot give away their Money to uphold a Ministry contrary to the Counsel of their Lord and Master, *Jesus Christ*. Yet did these *Priests* and *Fairsayers* say, *If we had been in the days of our Forefathers, we would not have slain the Prophets, nor put them to death*; Yet when our Lord and Master, *Jesus Christ*, came in that holy Body, to do the Will of his Father, they envied him, and put him to Death, whom all the Prophets pointed unto, and bare witness of; but his appearance unto them was not in that way and manner that they in their carnal minds expected: For (as the Prophet said) *His Visage was marred more than any man's*; Therefore the *Chief-Priests* saw no comliness in him; but because of the envy they had to him, they moved the people to cry, *Crucifie him, crucifie him.*

What! Was it for any evil that *John the Baptist's* head was cut off? Nay, certainly; only for discharging himself faithfully: But envy reigned in his *Persecutors* against him, as it doth now at this day: And you that are in the like wantonness, that pleaseth so much the Lust of the same mind, that caused the Servant of God to lose his Life: Come out of it, and be more serious; for it is not pleasing to the Lord, but draws the mind wholly from him.

What! Was it for any evil that *Paul* and *Silas* were put into Prison? Nay nay; yet were they caught and brought before the Rulers, and cried against, *These men do exceedingly trouble the City, and teach customs that are not lawful for us to receive*, said they, and therefore were they cast into prison, whipt, and put into the Stocks. And this hath been the Lot of the Faithful from one Age to another, that they have received by the hands of unreasonable men.

So

So from time to time, the false Prophets and *Traitors*, pretending the Scripture to be their Rule, and say, *If they had been in the days of their Forefathers, they would not have destroyed the Prophets*; Yet, people, you may see who they were that stirred up the Civil Magistrates from time to time to be their Slaves and Drudges, for to serve their Wills and Pleasures, which indeed, if they could, would bring all under them, to be subject unto them, as they have done in many Countries and Kingdoms, the which I hope, the Lord will not suffer to come to pass.

Now come and consider (you that are following the same Exercises) whom you had for your Examples and Patterns in these things, *whether the true Prophets, or the false? whether Christ, or Antichrist? whether the Disciples and Ministers of Christ, or those that vilified his Appearance in that holy Body?* So low, so contemptible was it to the great Rabbins, in no esteem at all, because it suited not with their Self-exaltation, and their Gain was thereby come to be lessened; yet nevertheless to a despised People, that were rejected and set at nought, that, as the Apostle *Paul* said, became a spectacle to the World, Angels and Men, to them his Appearance was very lovely and amiable; and it is the same now at this day, his spiritual Appearance is highly esteemed, and is become our chief Corner-stone, although rejected by those that builded not upon the unmovable Rock, the sure Foundation, upon which the Saints have builded, and have found their Building sure and stedfast: Therefore good cause hath God given to his faithful Followers to trust him that never failed those that would not deny him, whose precious Bloud was shed for all mankind, and would have all mankind be saved, and doth not desire the death of any one, but that all may come to have an assurance of everlasting Life, which is the chiefest thing, and our greatest concernment.

Therefore having true love to your Eternal Welfare, I recommend to you the Words of *Jesus Christ*, Mat. 7. 15, 16, 17. *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves; ye shall know them by their Fruits: Do men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles? Even so, every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit, but a corrupt Tree bringeth forth evil Fruit.* So that seeing it is the Fruit which manifesteth the Nature and Quality whereby the true Ministers and false also are discovered, we have good cause to hearken and adhere to the direction of our Lord and Master, *Christ Jesus*,

Jesus, in that case and all other cases, and to follow him whithersoever he leads us, because his Yoak is become easie, and his Burthen light.

So you that are telling of People the Scripture is your Rule, but are walking contrary to the Example and Pattern of the true Prophets of old, and of *Christ Jesus*, and his holy Apostles and Ministers, you manifest your selves to be like the false Prophets, whom the true Prophets were commissioned by God to cry against, and like the Spirit of Antichrist, that put our Lord and Master, *Jesus Christ*, to death, and that put to death and imprisoned his faithful Servants, who through Ages have sought the eternal *Welfare* of all more than their own *Interest*.

So, having cleared my Conscience in the sight of my God, the Peace of God I have in it, and with me it doth remain, which will out-last all our Tribulations. Therefore to the God of my Life give the Glory, to whom my Soul truly desireth that the Honour of all may be given, for he is worthy for evermore.

And as one amongst many thousands more, do I desire the universal good of all, and the eternal Welfare of all, even from the King upon his Throne, to the Begger upon the Dunghil, that when it is the will of the Almighty to call us out of these Tabernacles of Clay, we may have a resting Place with the Lord for evermore.

And as for those that in some contrary Words swore falle against me, which I testifie I did not speak, and can truly say, was not at all in my mind. I desire they may come to see their Evil, and repent of it, and all other their Evils, that they may come to know Peace with the Lord in this World and that which is to come.

However, it being my Lot, with many more whom God hath illuminated and given to see the way that is broad, and leads to Destruction, and the Snares and Traps that are laid by the Enemy of man's Soul and eternal Peace with his Master, whereby he would separate us from the streight and narrow way, which leads to Life, which, though it be attended with so many difficulties, yet in the end of all afflictions, persecutions and restraint, there is a resting in the Peace and Favour of God; the earnest whereof is an hundred fold in this Life, which bears up our heads, and gives a good encouragement to endure to the end; knowing, as the Apostle saith, *We shall reap, if we faint not*; and as Christ Jesus our Lord and Master (for whom we suffer) said, *Mat.* 5.

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10, 11, 12. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness-sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely, for my sake; Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you.* And this being my Lot, with many more, not for any Evil that we have done to any man or woman; but barely for not sinning against what the Lord hath manifested of himself unto us, hoping and believing he will support us, and will give us of the living Bread and Water of life, which will nourish our immortal Souls.

And so I shall conclude with that saying of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, (which I hope I shall (with my fellow Prisoners) practice) Mat. 5. 44. *But I say unto you, love your Enemies: Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despightfully use you, and persecute you.*

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